



**ORTHODOX
PRAYERS
OF OLD ENGLAND**

A Western Rite
Prayer-Book
for Orthodox Christians



Third Edition

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HOLY SYNOD OF MILAN
The Autonomous Orthodox Metropolia
of Western Europe & The Americas

ISBN 0-923864-17-2

Psalms from 'The Psalter According to the Seventy,'
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BETROTHALS



MARRY ORTHODOX — CONSULT YOUR PRIEST BEFORE MAKING ANY PLANS

The faithful should marry only within the Orthodox Faith. Spouses must be unrelated by blood or marriage. No engagement or marriage plans should ever be made before consulting the Priest. He will be able to identify any impediments, explain legal requirements, prepare the required announcements (called “banns”), write the needed letters, explain the times during which weddings are forbidden, and so on.

FORBIDDEN TIMES

Wedding celebrations may not be performed:

In Western Rite

- On the First Sunday in Advent and from then until the Octave of Theophany (permitted on the Octave day);
- On Septuagesima Sunday and from then until the Octave of Pascha (not permitted on the Octave day);
- From the Sunday before Ascension until the seventh day after Pentecost (permitted on Trinity Sunday).

In Eastern Rite

- Not on fast days or within fasting seasons (e.g., Great Lent, Nativity fast, etc.)

Note: Because many of the Western Rite faithful marry Eastern Rite faithful, it often happens that marriages are celebrated at times permitted by the customs of the Eastern Churches, even if these times are not permitted by the customs of the Western Churches.

LOCATION

Weddings must be done in church.

BANNS OF MARRIAGE

In the procession preceding the Liturgy on Sundays or Feasts, the Priest announces:

N. of (parish) has spoken with N. of (parish) to have her to his wife, and to right live in form of Holy Church. If any man know any hindrance, why they may not come together, speak now or never, on pain of anathema.

PREPARATION

The couple who are to be married should prepare wedding rings and wedding coins, select the symbolator (best man), have crowns made—unless the church is providing crowns, and bring tapers to hold during the first part of the wedding Liturgy.

GO TO CONFESSION FIRST

Before betrothal spouses must confess to their spiritual father(s).



On the Wedding Day

ARRIVAL AT THE CHURCH

Bride's Party

Bride
 Bridesmaids
 Bridesknights
 Matron
 Father or other relative who will
 'give her away'
 Other relatives of the bride

Bridegroom's Party

Bridegroom
 Best man ("symbolator")
 Other relatives of the groom

Note: The symbolator usually serves as the godparent for the couple's sons, and therefore says the Symbol of Faith for them during the catechumenate.

BETROTHALS

This is done outdoors, weather permitting. The Priest stands just outside the doors to the nave, facing west; before him, facing east, stand the man & woman. The man stands to the right of the woman (on the Priest's left hand side), she to his left, & all the people encircle them. The Priest begins:

Brethren, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and His Angels, and all the Saints, and in the face of the Church, to join together two bodies, to wit, those of this man and this woman, that henceforth they may be one body, and that they may be two souls, in the faith and law of God, to the end that they may together deserve eternal life, despite whatsoever they heretofore have done. I charge you all by the Father and by the Son and by the Holy Spirit, that if any of you know any reason why these persons may not lawfully be joined together in Matrimony, he now confess it. (He then charges the man and woman in the same vein).

Priest: **N., wilt thou have this woman to thy lawful wedded wife; wilt thou love her, and honour her, keep her and guard her, in health and in sickness, as a husband should a wife, and forsaking all others on account of her, keep only unto her, so long as ye both may live?**

Groom: **I will.**

Priest: **N., wilt thou have this man to thy lawful wedded husband; wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him, in health and in sickness, as a wife should a husband, and forsaking all others on account of him, keep only unto him, so long as ye both may live?**

Bride: **I will.**

Bride's father: **And as for me, in the name of the Lord I give her to thee.**

Her father places her right hand into the Priest's right hand, & the Priest gives her hand to the groom. Holding her rt. hand in his rt. hand, his hand on top, he says:

Groom: **I, N., take thee, N., to my wedded wife, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part,**

if Holy Church will bless it. And thereto I plight thee my troth.¹

He lets go of her hand. She straightway takes his rt. hand in her rt. hand (her hand on top), & says:

Bride: I, N., take thee, N., to my wedded husband, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to be obedient to thee, till death do us part, if Holy Church will bless it. And thereto I plight thee my troth.¹ *(She lets go of his hand.)*

Priest: Bring out the silver and the rings! Choir:

PSALM 67 (IN PART)

Give Thou command, O God, unto Thy hosts & strengthen, O God, this which Thou hast wrought in us.

Because of Thy temple in Jerusalem & kings shall bring gifts unto Thee.

Rebuke the wild beasts of the reed, that congregation of bulls among the heifers of the peoples & lest they exclude them that have been proved like silver.

O Glory be to the Father and to the Son & and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, and now and always & and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Choir:

Kyrieléyson. Xristeléyson. Kyrieléyson. Priest: Our Father... (softly, till:)

∕ And lead us not into temptation.

℞ But deliver us from evil.

∕ Save Thy servant and Thy handmaiden.

℞ O my God, that hope in Thee. (Ps. 85:3)

∕ The Lord shall keep you from all evil.

℞ The Lord shall guard your souls. (Ps. 120:8)

∕ Let us bless the O Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit.

℞ Let us praise Him, and supremely exalt Him unto the ages.

∕ Let us praise the Lord, Whom the Angels praise.

℞ To Whom Cherubim and Seraphim cry aloud: Holy, Holy, Holy.

∕ O Lord, hear my prayer. ℞ And let my cry come unto Thee. (Ps. 101:1)

∕ The Lord be with you. ℞ And with thy spirit.

Let us pray. O Creator and Preserver of mankind, Giver of spiritual grace, Bestower of eternal salvation, do Thou, O Lord, send forth the blessing of Thy Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, upon these rings, that they who shall wear them may be armed with the strength of heavenly defence, and that they may be conducive to their eternal salvation. O Through Christ our Lord. ℞ **Amen.**

¹ To plight one's "troth" (rhymes with "both") is to pledge one's true vow

Let us pray. Bless, O Lord, these rings which we bless in Thy holy name, that whosoever shall wear these seals of faith as a betrothed spouse may remain in Thy peace, and abide in the dedicated purity of fidelity, and live, and grow, and grow old in Thy love, unto length of days. O Through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God through all the ages of ages. ℞ **Amen.**

GIVING OF THE RINGS

The Priest takes the ring for the woman and hands it to the groom, who takes it in the three fingers of his right hand (those he crosses himself with). Holding the bride's rt. hand with his left hand, he touches the ring to her fingers as prompted by the Priest:

(touching her thumb) **In the name of the Father,**
(touching her 2nd finger) **and of the Son,**
(touching her 3rd finger) **and of the Holy Spirit,**
(placing it on her ring finger) **Amen.**¹

Groom: With this ring I thee wed ...

He places his wedding coins in her cupped hands, saying:

**... and this gold and silver I thee give, and with my body I thee worship,²
 and with all my worldly goods I thee endow.**

The same things are done by the woman. Then they bow before the Priest, who says:

**Be ye blessed of the Lord, Who hath made the world out of nothing.
 ℞ Amen.**

℣ **The Lord be with you.** ℞ **And with thy spirit.** *Priest: Let us pray.*

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, be with you, and may He Himself both unite you and fill you with His blessing. O Who liveth and reigneth, God through all the ages of ages. ℞ **Amen.**

Let us pray. God the Father bless you; Jesus Christ keep you; the Holy Spirit enlighten you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be merciful to you; may He turn His countenance toward you and give you peace, and so fill you with all spiritual blessing for the remission of your sins, that ye may have life eternal and live to the ages of ages. ℞ **Amen.**

ENTRANCE INTO THE CHURCH

PSALM 127

**Blessed are all they that fear the Lord ⁊ that walk in His ways.
 Thou shalt eat the fruit of thy labours ⁊ blessed art thou, and well
 shall it be with thee.**

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine ⁊ on the sides of thy house,

Thy sons like young olive trees ⁊ round about thy table.

Behold, so shall the man be blessed ⁊ that feareth the Lord.

The Lord bless thee out of Sion ⁊ and mayest thou see the good things

¹ The rings are worn on the right hand. ² 'Worship,' that is, honour and cherish.

of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
 And mayest thou see thy children's children & peace be upon Israël.
○ Glory be to the Father and to the Son & and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, and now and always & and unto the ages of
ages. Amen.

Here the bride & groom kneel in the centre of the nave, facing the altar:

Kyrieléyson. Xristeléyson. Kyrieléyson. Our Father... *(softly, till:)*

✠ **And lead us not into temptation. ☩ But deliver us from evil.**

✠ **Save Thy servant and Thy handmaiden.**

☩ **O my God, that hope in Thee.** (Ps. 85:3)

✠ **Send forth unto them, O Lord, help from Thy sanctuary.**

☩ **And out of Sion help them.**

✠ **Be unto them, O Lord, a tower of strength.**

☩ **Against the face of the enemy.** (Ps. 60:4)

✠ **O Lord, hear my prayer. ☩ And let my cry come unto Thee.** (Ps. 101:1)

✠ **The Lord be with you. ☩ And with thy spirit. Priest: Let us pray.**

The Lord bless you out of Sion, that ye may see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of your life, and that ye may see your children's children, and peace upon Israel. Through **○ Christ our Lord. ☩ Amen. Priest:** Let us pray.

O God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, bless these young persons, and sow in their hearts the seed of eternal life: that whatsoever they shall profitably learn, they may indeed fulfill the same. **○ Through Jesus Christ Thy Son, Restorer of mankind, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God through all the ages of ages. ☩ Amen. Priest:** Let us pray.

Look down, O Lord, from heaven, and bless this covenant, and as Thou sentest Thy holy Angel Raphael to Tobias, and to Sara the daughter of Raguel, so vouchsafe, O Lord, to send Thy blessing upon these young persons: that abiding in Thy will, and continuing under Thy protection, they both may live, and grow, and grow old in Thy love: that they may be both worthy and peaceful, and that the length of their days may be multiplied. **○ Through Christ our Lord. ☩ Amen. Priest:** Let us pray.

Look down mercifully, O Lord, upon this Thy servant and upon this Thy handmaid, that in Thy name they may receive heavenly blessing, and that they may see the children of their sons and daughters to the third and fourth generation in safety: and that they may remain ever steadfast in Thy will, and attain hereafter to the kingdom of heaven. **○ Through Christ our Lord. ☩ Amen. Priest:** Let us pray.

The almighty and merciful Lord, Who by His power created our first parents Adam and Eve, and knited them together by His own sanctification, Himself sanctify and bless your souls and bodies, and join you together in the union and love of true affection. **○ Through Christ our Lord. ☩ Amen.**

God almighty bless you with every heavenly blessing, and make you worthy in His sight, pour upon you the riches of His grace, and teach you the word of truth, that ye may be able to please Him both in body and soul. **☩ Amen.**

CROWNING

Crowns are placed upon the spouses' heads & they are given lit candles. They are led into the presbytery, & stand on the south side of the chancel.

Wedding Mass

The Mass of the Most-Holy Trinity is begun, with these scriptures:

Apostle 1 Corinthians 6:15-20
Gospel Matthew 19:3-6

The bride & groom give up their candles immediately after the Symbol of Faith.

THE VEILING

After the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) has been sung, the bride and groom kneel at the step of the altar, in the centre. A pall called the care-cloth is held over them by servers.

CANON OF THE MASS

After the Our Father is sung, and the prayer which immediately follows it is completed, with “through all the ages of ages, amen,” the Priest places the Body of the Lord on the paten, veils the chalice, turns to the kneeling couple, and prays:

℣ The Lord be with you. ℞ And with thy spirit. Priest: Let us pray.

O Lord, be merciful to our supplications, and uphold the ordinances whereby Thou didst ordain the continuity of the human race: that what is joined by Thine authority may be preserved by Thy help. **O** Through Christ our Lord. **℞ Amen. Priest: Let us pray.**

O God Who by the power of Thy strength madest all things out of nothing: Who after arranging the beginnings of the universe didst create for man, made in the image of God, the inseparable assistance of woman, that Thou mightest give the body of woman a beginning from the flesh of the man, teaching that what Thou hast been pleased to make one it should never be lawful to put asunder: (O God, Who hast consecrated the conjugal union to such an excellent Mystery that Thou dost signify the Sacrament of Christ and the Church in the bonds of nuptials:*) **O** God, by Whom woman is joined to man and the union, instituted in the beginning, is gifted with that blessing which alone hath never been removed, neither by the punishment of original sin nor by the sentence of the Flood: Look graciously upon this Thy handmaiden, who now to be joined in wedlock seeketh to be guarded by Thy protection. May the yoke of love and peace be upon her: may she be a wife faithful and chaste in Christ, and remain an imitator of the holy women. May she be to her husband loveable as Rachel, wise as Rebecca, long-lived and faithful as Sara. Let that author of falsehood find nothing of his works in her: let her, in the bond of faith and of Thy commandments, remain joined unto one marriage-tie, flee unlawful unions, and arm her weakness with the strength of discipline. May she bear responsibility with modesty, be venerable in chastity, and learned in heavenly teachings. May she be fruitful in child-bearing; may she be of good report and innocent, and attain the old age she desireth: and may she see her children’s children even unto the third and fourth generation: and attain to the repose of the blessed, and to the kingdom of heaven. **O** Through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God through all the ages of ages. **℞ Amen.** * not said at 2nd marriages

If a Bishop is celebrating, he now sings six blessings over them, for the six water-pots at Cana of Galilee. Next, the Priest sings:

The peace of the Lord be always with you. ℞ And with thy spirit.

Choir: O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us (3x).

After "O Lamb of God," the care-cloth is removed & the bride & groom rise to their feet. The Priest kisses the groom, who kisses his bride (on the cheek like the clergy do).

HOLY COMMUNION

The spouses take Holy Communion together at the altar step.

AFTER THE DISMISSAL

The bride & groom are led in front of the iconostasis door. The Priest comes out through the door & blesses them there, saying:

May the Lord bless you; may Jesus Christ keep you; may the Holy Spirit illuminate you; may He fill your hearts with His light; may He strengthen your understanding; may He defend you from the Devil; and may Christ the Son of God bring you to eternal life.

℞ **Amen.**

CUP OF WEAL & WOE

He blesses a cut-up loaf of bread & a cup of wine:

✠ **The Lord be with you. ℞ And with thy spirit. Priest: Let us pray.**

Bless, O Lord, this bread and this drink and this vessel, as Thou didst bless the five loaves in the wilderness and the six water-pots in Cana of Galilee: that all they who taste of them may be discreet, sober, and undefiled, O Saviour of the world. O Who livest and reignest with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God through all the ages of ages. ℞ **Amen.**

The groom, then bride, takes a sop—dips a bit of bread into the wine & eats it—and drinks a little from the cup. Sharing this cup shows they are ready to share life's sufferings as well as joys (Mark 10:38-39). Lastly the Priest sings:

Let us pray. O Holy Lord, Father almighty, everlasting God, we humbly pray Thee, that Thou wouldst be pleased mercifully to nurture the union of Thy servant N. & Thy handmaiden N. with Thy blessing. O Thou Who art almighty, let the enemy's snares be kept far away from them, we beseech Thee, and may they, who under Thy providence are found worthy of being united, make their marriage itself an icon of holiness. O Through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God through all the ages of ages. ℞ **Amen.**

The wedding service in the church is ended.



Blessing of the Bed

Later on the wedding day, the Priest comes to the newlyweds' house to bless their bed. By way of preparation, the newlyweds should have an icon which looks out over the bed, and should set out holy water and, if safe, matches for his use.

✠ **The Lord be with you. ℞ And with thy spirit. Priest: Let us pray.**

Bless, O Lord, this bedchamber and all that dwell therein, that they may be established in Thy peace and abide in Thy will, and in Thy love may live and grow old, and be multiplied unto length of days. O Through Christ our Lord. ℞ **Amen.**

Then the newlyweds stand next to the bed, & the Priest blesses it:

✠ **The Lord be with you. ✠ And with thy spirit. Priest: Let us pray.**

Bless, O Lord, this sleeping-chamber, Who neither slumberest nor sleepest, Who keepest Israel. Keep Thy servant and Thy handmaiden resting on this bed from all the phantasies and illusions of demons; guard them as they wake, that they may meditate on Thy commandments; guard them as they sleep, that in their slumber they may be conscious of Thee; and that they may be defended by the help of Thy protection, here and everywhere. O Through Christ our Lord. ✠ **Amen.**

The Priest censes the bed, then the couple climb onto the bed & he blesses them:

Let us pray. God bless your bodies and souls, and bestow His blessing upon you, as He blessed Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ✠ **Amen.**

Let us pray. May the hand of the Lord be upon you, and may He send His holy Angel to keep you all the days of your life. ✠ **Amen.**

Let us pray. May the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless you, He that is threefold in number and One in name. ✠ **Amen.**

He sprinkles them with holy water. If the rest of the house has not been blessed, he may now bless it, beginning at the icon corner.



Final Note: The new couple should keep their virginity that night, in awe of the Holy Mysteries—but this is a counsel, not a commandment.

